

Title: *Martin's Big Words*

Author: Doreen Rappaport

Illustrator: Bryan Collier

Copyright: 2001

Genre: Multi-Cultural

Summary: This book mainly describes the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. with both his struggles and his triumphs. It talks about his childhood and how the white vs. black issue was something that changed society. He watched his father grow up as a minister and saw him preach about peace and being together instead of war and segregation. Martin Jr. listened well because he applied those same concepts from his father into his own personal speeches. The book talks about the Rosa Parks on the bus dilemma where the black citizens stood up for their rights and walked to church and work rather taking the white ridden bus. Lastly, the book refers to Martin Luther King Jr.'s enthusiasm, hard work, and loyalty to the people and his desire for change in the South where all people would be treated equal and all people would have rights. He was always there and he always cared which is another reason why we celebrate his life to this day.

Activity 1 (Original): (This activity should be done during the week of Martin Luther King Day)

Have each student research Dr. King's life on the internet looking for things such as: His hometown, his education, his siblings/parents, his stages of work, some of his challenges, his speech (I have a Dream!), and his assassination. Write a biography over Martin Luther King Jr. of what you found on the internet or what you knew prior to reading the book.

Activity 2: Have the students memorize a passage in the "I have a Dream" speech that they feel is the most important part of the speech. Next have them recite that passage in front of the class and tell the class why they think it's important and what it means to them as far as segregation and equal rights. (Original)

Title: *Working Cotton*

Author: Sherley Anne Williams

Illustrator: Carole Byard

Copyright: 1992

Genre: Multi-Cultural

Summary: The book talks about a family who gets up at dawn and picks cotton the entire day moving from field to field with no breaks in between. The mother and father of the family are well accustomed to picking cotton and they have both gotten their children to develop a hard work ethic and become cotton pickers as well. Some of the children are faster than others, but this book is a very strict realization of what life was like for minority families during that time period. They worked from when it was dark in the morning till it was dark at night with only a very small lunch and short water breaks stopping their work schedule. This lifestyle was very rigid and strict and hasn't carried over as much to the migrant farmers of today, but during those times it was the only way for those families to earn an income.

Activity 1: I want each student to recall four or five different times when their mom or dad made them do a chore or something around the house that they hated doing. Maybe you had to clean the dishes before every meal or clean your room every week. Or maybe you worked on a farm and you had to feed the cattle or help your dad bail hay. Whatever the jobs around the house you did, get into groups of 3 and discuss your chores with the rest of the group. Together, brainstorm or make a list of 10 chores between the three of you and act out one of those chores in front of the entire class. (original)

Activity 2: After you act out the chore, write down a story that pertains to that particular chore. Examples: Did you get punished for something and had to do something around the house? Did you have to do a chore just to keep getting your allowance? Did you hate it when your brothers got the easy chores and you were stuck doing the tough stuff. Just recall a memorable moment for a chore you did and why it was memorable either in a good way or a bad way. (original)

Title: *Miz Berlin Walks*

Author: Jane Yolen

Illustrator: Floyd Cooper

Copyright: 1997

Genre: Multi-Cultural

Summary: Miz Berlin is constantly walking around the block with her big black umbrella which has the silver spokes, telling stories to herself. She's the lady in the town that everyone knows about because she's always out walking the streets telling stories to whoever is interested in listening. One day a young girl in the town wants to run up to Miz Berlin and join in her stories. At first, the girl doesn't even affect Miz Berlin as she just keeps talking away almost as if the girl had been walking beside her the entire time. These stories that she tells are block-long stories that last two days each and they usually center around the most random things that she's done in her lifetime. The young girl becomes infatuated with these stories of Miz Berlin catching crawdads, about the time when her home was flooded, and even about the day she was born in a small cabin. Each story ends as soon as the block ends and then the girl runs home full of new tales, counting down the hours until she gets to see Miz Berlin again.

Activity 1: Have each student interview one of their grandparents by bringing all of the chosen grandparents into class one day to share and discuss their lives in front of their grandchildren. Each student will conduct their own interview asking the grandparent questions that might include: Age, parents and siblings, vacations they took as a child or an adult, how education was different then than it is now, the jobs that they had in their lifetimes, their wedding day, funny childhood stories with their friends, what sports they might have played, society then vs. society now, etc...

Activity 2: After completing the interviews, have each student write up the responses they got from their grandparent so that it's formed into a well written paper. Then staying with the theme of the book, have each student read aloud their grandparent's story to the rest of the class. (I did both of these activities in my third grade reading class after we read the book, "The Giver")

Title: *Hoops*

Author: Robert Burleigh

Illustrator: Stephen T. Johnson

Copyright: 1997

Genre: Multi-Cultural

Summary: This book is a description for the love of the game basketball. The way the ball feels in your hands when you're dribbling, the joy you get from hitting a deep shot, the intensity that you play with when you're trying to win, and the way, the excitement you get when you see someone dunk are all feeling that this book describes for basketball. The author ties basketball in with electricity, sweat, drive, drama, skill, and poetry when connecting his words with the desire to play and enjoy basketball. It describes the game as having a sense of freedom in a way that when you're on the court all your other worries go out the window. Your only focus is on "playing" and working towards one of your goals.

Activity 1 (Original): Pick your favorite sport and write a short poem about that sport talking about: What you enjoy about playing baseball, football, basketball?, etc..., what positions in the sport do you enjoy playing?, How did you start playing that sport?, Who are some athletes that inspired you to play that sport?, and name some times when you played that sport in succeeded. What you talk about is up to you, but make sure you talk about your favorite sport and write it in a poem format. (The poem doesn't need to rhyme, but you will receive extra points if it does and still makes sense)

Activity 2: I want you to think of one time in your life where you had a goal and then write about what the goal was and what you did to try and achieve that goal. What got in your way? Was it easy or did you have to work hard for it? This goal could be about anything but write about the effort it took to succeed in what you wanted or desired as a goal? (I did this in a fourth grade class)

Title: My Visit to the Aquarium

Author/Illustrator: Aliko

Copyright: 1993

Genre: Multi-Cultural

Summary: This book talks about a young boy taking a trip to the aquarium with his sister and his dad. At the aquarium they saw tons of different kinds of fish, coral reef, crabs and lobsters, penguins walking about, and a kelp forest. Also, they saw different sharks in the tank, a tropical rain forest with birds and amphibians wondering about such as turtles and reptiles, and a great deal of salmon. Lastly, they visited dolphins and belugas, and fed seabirds to cap off their great day at the aquarium. They sat in tide pools, coastal streams, coral reefs, deep seas, and splashing waters and only got their hands wet. This book shares a great deal of diversity in its sea life, but also shares that same diversity in the different ethnic and racial characters throughout the book.

Activity1 (original): You can get the students excited about sea life by reading them the book and then having them create their own aquarium. Give each student a cardboard box and have them cut out pictures of sea creatures in magazines or make their own drawings to fill up their aquarium. They can design their own coral reef and so forth. The students will be graded on the creativity of their boxes.

Activity 2: Go on a field trip to a nearby aquarium or to a rain forest of some sort and have the students visit and see all of the animal life. Then when you get back to the classroom, have the students openly discuss their experiences at the aquarium. They will then create a poster as a class indicating the top 10 things they learned at the aquarium. This poster could cover anything. (We did this as a class on a third grade field trip)

Title: *The Talking Eggs*

Author: Robert D. San Souci

Illustrator: Jerry Pinkney

Copyright: 1989

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: This old time story involves a widow and her two daughters, Rose and Blanche, in which they lived on a farm that was extremely poor. Blanche, the younger sister had to do all of the difficult chores around the house as her sister Rose and her mother goofed around. One day when Blanche went to the well, she ran into an old lady who was quite thirsty, so Blanche fed her water and the woman thanked her and slowly disappeared into the woods. Later, Blanche would run away from home and follow that same old lady to her home where she would see a two headed cow, dancing rabbits, and chickens galore. When those chickens hatched eggs, they became magical and even talked. Blanche returned home to tell her good fortune to her mother and sister to much dismay. They became upset and eventually Rose went to the same house of the old lady hoping for the same fortune, but she mocked the two-headed cow, and dancing rabbits so the old lady told her to go back where she belonged, home. Never would Rose or her mother encounter the talking eggs.

Activity 1: Have each student bring in their own hardboiled egg so that they can decorate their eggs with different painting and designs using different colors or symbols of their choice. Then have the students write about why they decorated their egg the way they did in a short paper format. After doing this, have the students write about one of their favorite memories of Easter and elaborate by having them answer the questions: Why do we celebrate Easter? What's the importance of eggs during Easter? What does your family do on Easter morning? Do you enjoy Easter?

Following Activity: After they write their papers on the importance of Easter, have the students participate in an Easter egg hunt outside during the school day, using and hiding all of the eggs decorated in class as well as other plastic eggs to add to the enjoyment for the students. Use this activity during the time of Easter. (Both activities were original)

Title: *Corduroy*

Author/Illustrator: Don Freeman

Copyright: 1968

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: This story involves a toy bear named Corduroy who day after day sits on a shelf in a department store with all the other toy animals for sale, hoping that somebody will actually buy him and take him to his real home. He watches all the other animals get sold and is very upset until one day a girl comes into the store and is interested in buying him. However, because Corduroy is missing a button on his overalls, the girl's mother doesn't let her buy him. So at night after the store has already closed, Corduroy goes on an adventure in the store in search of his lost button. He goes up an escalator, through a large room with tables and chairs, and into a room with a large mattress, where he thinks he finds his button. He rips a button off the mattress and places it on his overalls until the night watchmen at the store hears him and places him back on his original shelf. The next day, the same girl comes in and sees Corduroy with two buttons and is finally allowed to take him home with her and ultimately take him to his real home.

Original Activity: Have the students write about an adventure that they went on that was either with their family, themselves, or their friends, and whether or not their adventure turned out the way they wanted it to. Did they get in trouble? Where did they go? What did they see? Why did they go? Was it dangerous? Did it end up being boring? Have the students answer some of these questions in their paper.

Featured Activity: Get with two partners and read to each other your adventures sharing ideas and deciding which adventure was the best out of the three people. Once you decide which one was the best, act out that adventure in front of the class using as many prompts as you want. Be as creative as you want and try to tie in concepts from the book, Corduroy with what happened in your particular adventure. Also, you can use the other students in the class as characters in your skit or miniplay. (Original)

Title: *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

Author: Dr. Seuss

Copyright: 1957

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: This book is a typical Dr. Seuss book in which the main character, the Grinch, hates everything about Christmas and wants no part of this festive time of the year. Because of his hatred towards Christmas, he tries to ruin it for all of the people (Whos) of Whoville by pretending to be Santa one night and stealing all of the presents from under the trees of houses around the town. He's an evil-stricken man who is greedy and decides to take all of the stolen presents back to his home. Until finally he comes to his senses and returns the stolen gifts back to the homes of Whoville citizens and in turn has his heart grow three full sizes. He realizes the importance of Christmas to all of those people and begins to understand that maybe Christmas has a deeper meaning than just store bought presents.

Activity 1: Have the students write a short book with a story and colored pictures to accompany that story. The story should be a description of what that student does with his/her family every Christmas morning. Then the students can draw pictures to visually show what each page is saying. Have the write about certain traditions of opening gifts, eating certain foods, and playing different games that their family does on Christmas day. Give them an example: (We open gifts together on Christmas morning, then my grandma brings over fresh cinnamon rolls for us to eat breakfast. Next, we listen to Christmas carols and play video games before we go to our Aunt's house for a big Christmas dinner, etc...) (Did this activity for many classes)

Activity 2: After the students write their books, have each student in the class bring in a gift and wrap it so that the class can have a Christmas Gift Exchange. This activity is intended to be a lot of fun, but make sure the students understand the concept from the book that Christmas isn't just about presents, it's about much more. And also, talk them about how each present is valuable in its own way and you should be thankful for every gift that you receive. (We did this activity as a class in third grade)

Title: *The Eleventh Hour (Curious Mystery)*

Author: Graeme Base

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: This mysterious children's book has an elephant as a main character named Horace who is turning 11 and wants to invite all of his good friends to his house for a huge birthday celebration. To Horace's party come animals from all over the neighborhood such as giraffes, pigs, a zebra, cats, alligators, and even a rhino all claiming to be Horace's friends. During the party, the different characters listen to music, play games, and are delighted to hear that Horace has prepared a big birthday feast for him and his friends. When the guests arrive for dinner, all the food has disappeared and everyone starts blaming one another, thinking that somebody must have stolen all of this great food. They begin to panic because they are so hungry when Horace goes back to the kitchen and prepares sandwiches for everyone to enjoy. They may not be as fancy as the previous meal, but they still get the job done and thus Horace saves the day.

Original Activity: Have each student write about a time when they either went to a birthday party of one of their friends or they had a birthday party of their own inviting all of their friends. Talk about where the party was, how many people came, what food did you and your friends eat, was their cake and ice-cream, and lastly how old were you when you had this party or went to the party (What grade).

Other Activity: This book involves a mystery, so have half of the students play the game of Clue in a few small groups to show them or teach them the concepts of mystery. Monitor the game and provide direction and detail when needed. Have the other half of the students do research on one of their favorite animals in the book from the internet. Have those students write basic facts in paragraph form about that particular animal. Where do they live? What do they eat? What color are they? Their size? Etc...

(Both of these activities were original)

Title: *Incredible Storybook*

Author/Illustrator: Michael Garland

Copyright: 2003

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: This book has a setting of an everyday, typical classroom in which Zack, the main character, is thinking that this new school-year is going to be just like all the rest, until Miss Smith arrived. She had a book which contained many fairytale stories and every time she would read a story to the class, the characters in that story would come to life. The three pigs and the big bad wolf, pirates on a ship, dragons and knights, goldilocks and the three bears, and Alice in Wonderland characters popped out of the book and into the school. It was complete chaos and the only way to get the characters back in the book would be to finish the story. At one point in the story all the characters from the different stories for fighting one another. Reading went from being boring to extremely exciting all thanks to the teaching of Miss Smith.

Original Activity: Brainstorm or list your five favorite fairytales and write down two things about each story that compels you to that story. Some examples include: Who are the characters/animals? What's the plot of the story? Where does the story take place?

Featured Activity: Pick one fairytale from that list and create your own scene from that story through an illustration. Use magazines, newspapers, pictures on the internet, crayons, and markers to create your own drawings for the characters from the story of your choice. Next, present your illustration to the rest of the class in a show-and-tell manner describing both the story you chose and the scene that goes along with it. Many students will have different stories so make sure each student is describing their story in good detail because other students in the audience may not have read that particular book. (We did this activity in our fourth grade class over a book)

Title: *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*

Author: Patricia Polacco

Copyright: 1994

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: This story talks mainly about how a young girl in the story can't get along with her brother who she thinks is extremely annoying. The red haired brother, Richard, was awful to his sister in everyway possible until his grandmother was watching, when he would become the perfect brother. Richard would constantly pick on her and always tell her that he could do everything better than she could like picking the most blueberries, running the fastest, climbing the highest, sitting the longest, and even burping the loudest. He was such a mean older brother in every way possible and after his sister saw a shooting star one night, she made a wish that she would one day be able to do something better than her brother. The next day they went to the circus and they were both riding the merry-go-around when Richard got off the ride. His sister, determined to stay on the merry-go-around longer ended up falling off and blacking out. With a change of heart, Richard carried his sister all the way home and then ran to get the doctor because his sister needed stitches. Their relationship changed after that because even though Richard always ridiculed her, he was still there for her when she needed him the most.

Activity 1: Have the students draw their own family portraits on a piece of white construction paper using any resources available to them such as crayons, markers, glue scissors, magazines, etc. Make sure the students are including all of their family members in their portraits like their mom, dad, brother, sister, step-brother, and even their pets. The goal is to relate the concept of family to the book they just read by having them, on a separate sheet of paper, write down several descriptive words about each person in their family. This separate sheet of paper will be turned into the teacher, but the portraits will be hung up on the bulletin board for everyone in the class to see.

(<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/reading/activity/2432.html>)

Title: *Babushka's Doll*

Author: Patricia Polacco

Copyright: 1990

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: Natasha was a very impatient child who always wanted her Babushka (Russian for grandmother) to do things for her. She was very bossy and spoiled, but her grandmother was able to handle her and not become too frustrated by her needs. Well one day Natasha finds a little doll lying on the shelf that turns out to be the doll that her grandmother played with as a child, although she only played with it once. Natasha was eager to play with the doll so her grandmother let her, which is when this typical, everyday doll came to life. The doll is bossy and orders Natasha around just like she did with her grandmother to the point where Natasha can't take it anymore. She begins to cry and when her grandmother returns Natasha tells her of the out of control doll, but her grandmother just thinks she had a bad dream. Her grandmother then tells her that she can play with the doll whenever she wants and that it's hers, but Natasha denies the offer and says that playing with it once was enough. The moral of the story is that Natasha is taught a lesson and becomes a better kid because of it.

Activity 1: While reading the book, have the students write down five words that they either couldn't say or didn't know the meaning to. Then using the dictionaries in class, have them look up the meaning to those five words and write down not only the meaning of those words, but what they mean in the story and why they are important to the story. (Original)

Activity 2: Have the students bring in their favorite toy growing up and talk in front of the rest of the class about the things that made that toy so enjoyable to them. Was it an animal, a cowboy, legos, a Barbie doll; whatever the toy have them share it with the rest of the class and talk about the significance of it and whether or not they still play with it. Then after they have shared their toy with the rest of the class, let them watch the movie, *Toy Story*, so they can see the act of fantasy and use their imaginations to see what it's like when real toys come to life. (Original)

Title: *Mr. Lincoln's Way*

Author: Patricia Polacco

Copyright: 2001

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: Mr. Lincoln is the perfect principal and gets along with all of his students by even taking them on special field trips and inviting kids to come and look at the stars at night through his telescope. However, Mr. Lincoln can't seem to get through to all of the students, especially the bully/troublemaker Eugene Esterhause. Eugene was always picking on kids and calling them names so Mr. Lincoln made it his goal to change Eugene into a better kid so that he could get along with all of the other students. In doing this, Mr. Lincoln found out that Eugene was interested in birds and he used birds as a way of reaching out to him. He gave Eugene a book all about birds and even let Eugene help him attract birds into the school atrium where two mallards even began to nest. Eugene finally seemed to be happy until his father found out that he had been spending a lot of time with his black principal, which he was not fond of. Mr. Lincoln then showed Eugene that all birds are different on the outside, but their differences are what make them so appealing and beautiful so everyone should be treated equally and not bullied around. Eugene promised to change his attitude and walked down to the atrium where he saw the mallard's eggs beginning to hatch. Eugene and Mr. Lincoln placed the mallards and their ducklings into the pond and watched them drift away peacefully. Eugene was changed for the better all because of the influence of Mr. Lincoln, something of which Eugene's grandfather was finally able to see.

Activity 1: Ask the students to take a minute and answer the following questions:

Who gave you your name? Do you know why it was chosen to be your name? What do you like about your name? Do you have any nicknames that you like/dislike? Next students will pair up and share their answers with another classmate. When both students have shared, the whole class comes together and each person gets to introduce their partner and shares a few things about what they learned about their partner's name to the entire class. This will show them that name-calling because of someone's skin color or because of the way they act is wrong and is something that they shouldn't do. It will also show them that some people have a story behind their names which could be very interesting to learn about.

([http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/binary-data/NoNameCalling\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/85-1.pdf](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/binary-data/NoNameCalling_ATTACHMENTS/file/85-1.pdf))

Activity 2: The book talked a lot about birds so to give the students more information about birds, have them look up facts on the internet about their favorite bird. Make it so that each student is identifying their particular bird with five facts and then have each student talk about the bird they researched in front of the entire class. Staying with the bird theme and applying the activity to art, have each student make their own bird feeder so that they can take them home with them. Appropriate supplies will be given to construct the bird feeder as this activity will wrap up the lesson on birds. (Original)

Title: *Thank You, Mr. Falker*

Author: Patricia Polacco

Copyright: 1998

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: This book talks about a young girl in elementary school who had the most difficult time trying to read. She really tries to read and wants to read, but she has dyslexia so her efforts are almost a non factor because of this horrible disability. Her classmates constantly ridicule her and tease her because she isn't quite up to their reading abilities so she begins to believe what they are saying in that maybe she is dumb. However, a change occurs as she moves up to fifth grade and has a teacher by the name of Mr. Falker. Mr. Falker admires her artwork, believes in her, and even stays after class to help with her reading. He really cares about Patricia and does everything in his power to help her out in this tough time. Her classmates, however, could care less and continue to tease and poke fun at Patricia calling her stupid and dumb. But she proves them wrong when she practices reading in front of Mr. Falker and another reading teacher to the point where her hard work pays off and she is finally able to fluently read in the fifth grade. Mr. Falker was patient with her and allowed her to do things that she never thought she could ever do.

Activity 1: Have the students take a piece of 11 X 14 construction paper and have them fold that construction paper into four different sections with each section labeled as follows: My feelings were hurt; I hurt someone else's feelings, a compliment for me, and a compliment for another. Under each section have them draw a quick picture showing a time when their feelings were hurt, a time they hurt someone else's feelings, a time they gave a compliment to someone else, and time in which they received a compliment from someone else. Once they have completed their posters, have them share their pictures in small groups and then come together as a class to discuss the importance of not bullying people, rather giving them compliments.

(3rd grade teacher)

Activity 2: To show the disadvantages students with disabilities have in the classroom, divide the class into three groups with three different categories of disability forms. Have one group walk around the classroom blindfolded so they are not able to see anything around them and they must use their senses just to walk. Give another group a written passage with the letters in words scrambled so that it's very difficult to read and comprehend. The third group has to put ear plugs in so that they can't hear anything around them and they must use the hand gestures actions of other individuals in order to follow directions. This short activity will show the students that it's very difficult to read and learn when you have a disability, regardless of its' severity. So it's important to tease these students possessing disabilities, but rather find ways to help them out so that they can read just as well as you do. (Original)

Title: *All the Places to Love*

Author: Patricia MacLachlan

Illustrator: Mike Wimmer

Copyright: 1994

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: This story talks about a young baby named Eli and his journey through all the places that eventually he learns to love. After being born, his grandmother showed him the valley, the hilltops, and the running river while his grandfather showed him his carved name in the family barn. His mother showed him the meadows and hay fields while his father showed him how to plow the fields and watch the beautiful birds that surround him. His grandmother then took him on adventures through the river jumping across rocks while also seeing ducks and turtles in the water. His mother then showed him how to pick blueberries while his grandfather continued the tradition of the barn names as he carved the name Sylvie, when Eli's sister was born. As Eli grew older, he still remembered all of the places his parents and grandparents took him which were all the places he came to love while living in a small town and not the big city. Now it's his responsibility to show his sister all the places that he traveled and saw so that maybe she can come to love them just as much as he did.

Activity 1: Have the students write about their favorite place that they've been to including where the place was?... What they enjoyed about that place?...Who they went there with?... What time of the year did they go?....What memorable or fun things did they do at this place?...and so forth. Make sure they are writing down specific and detailed information in a way that separates their place from every other student's place. After everyone has finished writing, have each person share their short story with the rest of the class. (Original)

Activity 2: This book directly relates to farm life and all of the animals that surround the farm. So elaborating on this, have the students use a US Map and cut out pictures from magazines, draw pictures, or find pictures on the internet of the different crops that are grown and the different animals that are raised while farming. Cut them out or draw small so that the different crops and animals can be placed on the map in the area where it is mainly grown and raised. When completed, each student will have a hands on map of farming and agriculture in the United States, which can then be added to the student's portfolio.

([http://www.homeschoolshare.com/all\\_the\\_places\\_to\\_love.php](http://www.homeschoolshare.com/all_the_places_to_love.php))

Title: *Grandfather's Journey*

Author: Allen Say

Copyright: 1993

Genre: Historical Fiction

Summary: A young man from Japan crosses the Pacific Ocean and explores the United States during the Meiji era. He falls in love with the beauty of California, but eventually returns home to Japan to marry his childhood sweetheart. The young man takes his new bride across the sea and they settle in California, where they have a daughter. As he watches his daughter grow up, the man is filled with regret toward his own childhood and decides to take his family back to Japan when his daughter is close to being grown up. He is happy to see his old friends again, but moves from the village where he grew up to a city nearby in order to satisfy his daughter, who has spent her entire life living in a city. She eventually marries and has a son, who is the narrator of the story. The man, now the titular grandfather of the story, finds that once again he misses California so he plans a trip to see his adopted country again with his grandson, but never gets a chance to see California again due to WWII taking place. His grandson eventually grows up and follows the same path as his grandfather, understanding his grandfather's feelings towards the two places he called home.

Activity 1: Have each student go to a computer and have them go to the website **[www.quia.com/](http://www.quia.com/)** where the teacher will then give the students the actual website to get to the vocabulary practice section for the book, *Grandfather's Journey*. Once in this site, each student will be able to work on a set of four activities related to the book that deal with word matching, concentration, word search, and vocabulary. All of these activities deal with words that are located in the book that may be somewhat difficult for students to comprehend. The students will be able to test their skills and enjoy themselves by playing games, yet learning at the same time. Plus this activity will greatly increase vocabulary and word recognition while targeting comprehension and meaning as well. (<http://www.quia.com/jg/311936.html>)

Activity 2: The author's grandfather traveled from Japan to California by means of steamship. So how did the author make the same journey to California when he was old enough? What type of transportation did he use? It certainly wasn't by steamship. So in this activity, have the students use construction paper along with markers or crayons to make a picture walk of transportation forms. Think of as many ways as you can that you have traveled or any other modes of transportation that you may never have used such as maybe a boat. Then have them write the transportation words on the paper, such as car or motorcycle, leaving them with enough space to draw the pictures for each particular mode of transportation. Enable them to be creative in choosing which transportation methods to use. They will each create their own picture walk as applied to the book they just read in class. (<http://www.susq-town.org/byer/New%20Reading%20Themes/grandfather.htm>)

Title: *Yonder*

Author: Tony Johnston

Illustrator: Lloyd Bloom

Copyright: 1988

Genre: Historical Fiction

Summary: This book relates back to the nineteenth century where yonder is used to describe the farmer on a jet black horse, the hills that roll forever, and the river that runs to see. The farmer and his new wife plant a plum tree in the fields and then plant a tree as a symbol of each of their newborn children. Over yonder the neighbors are attempting to build a barn while the mother is quilting and the father is plowing the wheat fields. The children perform the daily farm routines until they grow old enough to bear children who will do those same exact chores, over yonder. In the meantime, the plum tree continues to grow as parents become grandparents and children become adults. Over yonder, the plum tree adapts to the different seasons and holidays as do the people surrounding it. It's a simple lifestyle where peace and quiet are valued and family is the center of all daily activities in an ongoing cycle of generations.

Activity 1: Have the students walk outside and plant their own pine trees, using seeds given to them by the teacher. This lesson will apply to science and the learning or understanding of how a tree grows. After every two weeks upon planting their tree, the student will write down any observations that they see. These observations will be minimal at first, but make sure as time progresses, that the students are recording detailed information in changes of their tree due to the change in seasons. After their tree has stopped growing, have the students write a research paper on the changes they saw in the growth patterns of their tree as well as the structure and design that their pine tree possesses. This lesson could also apply when covering the seasons. (Original)

Activity 2: In learning about the different seasons, have the students create their own season chart on a piece of construction paper with four columns labeled as summer, spring, fall, and winter. Next, have the students write words under each column that in their minds describe each season the best. This could include what kinds of clothes you wear, what the weather is like, and what activities you can do with each season you deal with. Also, under each section have them draw a picture that describes their favorite memory of that season (Christmas in the winter).

Lastly, have them answer questions pertaining to all of the seasons such as: What season is it when the ground is white? What season is it when you wear a swimsuit? When do the leaves fall off the tree? What season is it when you can plant crops? These questions would come in quiz form and could be used as a means of assessing their knowledge on the seasons.

(Original)

Title: *The Black Woman*

Author: Phil Mendez

Illustrator: Carole Byard

Copyright: 1989

Genre: Historical Fiction

Summary: Jacob is a poor, unhappy boy from the city who is angry with the fact that he is black. He hasn't been able to adapt to his own racial background and feels like a misfit, even though his mother tells him it's ridiculous for him to even think such a thing. Well Jacob's attitude is about to turn around as magic begins to take part in his life. Many years ago, a brightly colored African cloth known as a kente brought its magic to the people of the Ashanti tribe. When the African people were sold into slavery, the kente was sold too, but through the years it has still kept its power. The power takes hold of a special, black snowman and transforms Jacob into thinking much differently about his own black heritage.

Activity 1: Read this book to the students during Christmas and have them write a letter to their mom as to what they are thankful for and also writing about why they are appreciative of their mother. In the book, Jacob was unhappy with his family background, so this activity would be a great way to have the students sharing why they are lucky to live in the homes that they live in and why they are lucky to be around the people that they are around everyday. Have the students writing in letter format so that they are learning about how to write a letter and then send the letter home to the parent decorated as a Christmas card from their child. (2nd grade teacher)

Activity 2: The book, *The Black Snowman*, deals with the concept of magic so this activity will deal with that concept along the lines of teaching a science lesson. The question is: **How can water be hot and cold at the same time?** To find out, you will need three bowls; one with hot water, one with cold water, and one with lukewarm water. Arrange the bowls in a row with the lukewarm bowl in the middle. Next have two students from the class come up and volunteer by having one student place their hand in the cold water while the other does the same with the hot water. Now the magic occurs in the middle bowl when both students take their hands out of the two previous bowls and place in them in the middle bowl. The student who originally placed his hand in the hot bowl will say that the middle bowl has cold water in it, while the other student will say the middle bowl contains hot water. This is a good science experiment to use that also related to the magic mentioned in the book they just read.

(<http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/magic-science-lessons-5085>)

Title: *Coming On Home Soon*

Author: Jacqueline Woodson

Illustrator: E.B. Lewis

Copyright: 2004

Genre: Historical Fiction

Summary: This story takes place during the war in which Ada Ruth faces a dilemma because due to the war, all the men are leaving their families to go fight meaning that other jobs are being filled by women, in particular Ada's mother. She's forced to leave Ada with her grandma all the meanwhile contemplating her decision to leave her beloved daughter. Ada's grandmother attends to her during her mother's absence, but to no avail as Ada has yet to receive a letter or money from her mother. The days go by and still no word from her mother, so Ada and her grandmother become restless with the empty void left in their hearts since the mother's absence. Every time the postman goes by the house without stopping Ada begins to cry because she knows that another day has passed without word from her mother. The grandmother tries to help pass the time and is doing a great job of it when finally a letter arrives from Ada's mother signaling to her that she will soon be coming home.

Activity 1: In their response journals, have the students write about a time when they felt abandoned or left behind and have them talk about what they did to pass the time. Did their mother or father leave them to go to work? And who did they stay with during that time? Did they feel scared or alone? Was it a time when they got lost at a certain place and couldn't find their brother, sister, or parents anywhere? Did they run away from home? How did they feel when that special person came back to care for them? What were some of the feelings they had when that person left? These are some things the students should consider before writing their responses and turning them into the teacher. These responses should relate to the book when Ada's mother left her. (Original)

Activity 2: This book talks about how Ada wrote letters to her mother to try and figure out when she might be coming back home. Well to expand on that concept, pair each student up with a pen pal from a different class in the same grade. Once a week the student will be asked to write a letter to his/her pen pal over different topics assigned for that particular week. These letters will be designed for students to ask questions and verbally interact with another student, yet learn more about their likes/dislikes at the same time. Then every two weeks the student will get to meet their pen pal in person and talk to them one-on-one so that they are socially interacting as well. In the story, the mother eventually comes home, so I want the pen pals to talk to one another rather than just always sending letters back and forth. The pen pal assignments will begin after reading this book and the topics they can write about will vary from what they did over the weekend, what's their favorite sport, what's their favorite restaurant, and so forth. (3rd grade teacher)

Title: *My Rows and Piles of Coins*

Author: Tololwa M. Mollel

Illustrator: E.B. Lewis

Copyright: 1999

Genre: Historical Fiction

Summary: Saruni gets five whole ten-cent coins from his mother Yeyo to go and spend at the market. At the market he passed some shiny bicycles that he had always wanted to buy, but Saruni didn't have enough coins to buy something that nice yet. Once he collected all of these coins, he would stack them into rows and piles hoping that one day he could accumulate enough coins to buy his very own bicycle. The weeks grew on and Saruni's money box kept getting larger and larger while in the meantime he was having his dad teach him how to ride a bike. His workload grew heavier and heavier and his money box was getting larger by the day as he continued to stack his coins into rows and piles. He finally thought he had collected enough coins to buy a bicycle so he headed down to the market, but the bike owner laughed in his face at his mere three hundred and five coins. Well that didn't matter because his persistence and hard work paid off anyway as his father decided to sell his bike to Saruni for thirty shillings and fifty cents, the same amount that the bike owner had laughed in his face with. It wasn't the fanciest bike in the world, but it was a bike that Saruni had earned with his own money.

Activity 1: Relating this book to math, have the students work on counting money in accordance to adding and subtracting change. Bring in numerous amounts of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters to have the students finding different ways to come up with exact change. Pair them into groups of three and give them three different amounts of money where they have to find three different ways to come up with that money using different combinations of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Next, have them practice their ability to subtract by giving them a set amount of money such as \$2 and have them take away change until they reach \$0.80. Again make sure they are coming up with different ways to deduct the money using different coin combinations. (Original)

Activity 2: In the story, Saruni greatly enjoyed riding his bike. Using a variety of magazines, have each student cut out pictures of things they enjoy doing the most such as their favorite foods or their favorite sport and then using those pictures, have them create their own collage on a separate piece of construction paper. Then after everyone has completed the assignment have each student share their collage with the rest of the class explaining why they cut out what they did. (Fourth grade teacher)

Title: *Molly Bannaky*

Author: Alice McGill

Illustrated by: Chris Soentpiet

Genre: Non-Fiction

Summary: On a cold morning in 1683, a dairymaid named Molly Walsh was accused of stealing and therefore brought before the court. Because she could read, Molly escaped the typical punishment of death on the gallows. When she was seventeen, Molly was exiled from her country of England and sentenced to work as an indentured servant in an American colony. Molly worked for a farmer in Maryland for seven years before she was finally given her freedom. She was given an ox, a plow, two hoes, tobacco seeds, seed corn, clothing, and a gun and asked to stake land which was unheard of for women during that time. She then married an African slave and turned a one-room cabin in the wilderness into a hundred acre farm for her husband and her to live in. She lived happily and eventually got the opportunity to name her grandson whom she taught to read and write; and tell her life story to as once being a dairymaid across the ocean in England.

Activity: The theme of the book relates to a course of time in which Molly's life changed drastically after she was sentenced to court. She was kicked out of her country, then moved to Maryland, then became a servant for a farmer, then staked her own land, married an African slave, built her own farm, and got to share her story with her beloved grandson. This story of Molly Bannaky consisted of a sequence of events or a timeline of her life. So as a related activity, have the students create their own timeline of the **MAJOR** events that have happened in their lives up to this point. Try to not have them focusing on small things, but rather the big things that have helped shaped their life. Things to include in the timeline: Your birthday, your first words/steps, when you started riding a bike, when you went to daycare (preschool), when you attended school for the first time, when you played your first sport, and any other personal experience that you could think of. This timeline could include ages rather than years and the students should be able to collaborate with their parents as to when and how old the child was when a specific experience occurred.

Original Idea

Title: *Rock of Ages*

Author: Tonya Bolden

Illustrated by: R. Gregory Christie

Genre: Non-Fiction

Summary: This book is a tribute to the Black Church in which several years ago, in the midst of a casual, meandering conversation about black life and history in America, Elza Dinwiddie-Boyd remarked, "If you don't know about the Black Church, you don't know about the black experience." This quote was the inspiration in writing this book because regardless of your religion, if you have any interest in American history, you cannot overlook the role that the Black Church has played in black survival and triumphs. The book talks about the contributions of Elza and how in the 1960's, it was in the Black Church that the black people could lay down their racial burdens as well as being safe and free from the indignities and hostilities that they experienced. So in that regard, the Black Church was, in so many ways, a lifeline, a lifesaver.

Activity: This activity and the reading of the book will take place during Black History Month. Have the students come up with a calendar detailing an interesting African American history fact for one day during each month. The class will be broken down into 4 groups so that each group will be responsible in finding a fact for three different months of the year. Each group will need access to a computer because research will need to be done in order to find information concerning African American history. Not only does each group need to find three facts, but they must also write a brief description as a group as to the significance and importance of that fact in terms of the development of African American History. The class will come together with the completed calendar and appropriate descriptions and the calendar will be hung in the hallway for everyone to see.

<http://www.worksheetlibrary.com/teachingtips/blackhistoryteaching.html>

Title: *So You Want to Be President*

Author: Judith St. George

Illustrator: David Small

Genre: Non-Fiction

Summary: This book talks about the good things and the bad things that come from being the President of the United States. Some good things include living in the White House and having your own movie theatre, but some bad things involve having to dress up every day and please everybody all of the time. The book discusses how and why Presidents have come in just about every variety such as some being generals like George Washington and actors like Ronald Reagan while others have been heavy like William Taft and small like James Madison. Some have been born in log cabins like Andrew Jackson and others in mansions like William Harrison. Through the embarrassment of skinny-dipping John Adams to the adventures of Teddy Roosevelt's kids the book shows many of the responsibilities that the President faces while in office. The author shares the background facts of nearly every President so the readers can gain a sense of the good and bad of being the head man as well as an understanding of what it takes to be President.

Activity: At the back of the book there is a short biography of every President up to Bill Clinton. Have each student pick a different President and write a short biography on that President. This paper must include accurate facts and statistics so the students will need to do thorough research on a computer of the President they have chosen. Make sure they are including things such as: When he was born/died or still living, his childhood growing up, his education, his working career, does he have any children and who is his wife, and his legacy as a President (What did he accomplish while in office). These papers will be graded by a rubric so that it is written well with little to no errors and will also be graded by the effort the student put forth in researching for the paper. They will be turned in after reading the book in class, but each student will share his/her paper with the rest of the class first.

Original idea

Title: *Fires and Floods*

Author: Kate Waters

Genre: Non-Fiction

Summary: This book provides a detailed description for fires and floods and the ways in which they start and can be prevented. The author discusses how fire and water can help people, but yet also cause natural disasters. Forest fires can spread quickly and floods can cover houses and towns as well as causing a great deal of damage. Fire is something that is necessary at times, but if it gets out of hand then disaster will strike. Similar to fire, water is a necessity for animals, plants, and survival, but too much water such as the form of a flood will be devastating to the area or areas that it strikes.

Activity: Have the students visit [Smokey Bear's Web site](http://www.smokeybear.com/) where they will be able to participate in different online activities focusing on wildfires and how to prevent them, as well as learning about fire safety. The website provides a great deal of information for the students to comprehend and enjoy as well as exciting games and activities that will keep them focused. Some of the activities include a forest fire prevention quiz and a campfire word unscramble to name a few. After reading the book on fires, the students can get a sense of fire safety and real-life experiences as it applies to them. If a real fire were to take place, this website could help to provide knowledge on what the child should do in that dangerous setting. The students will be assessed by their scores on the quiz and participation on the computer (Did they try all of the activities). This activity is designed for younger elementary students.

<http://www.smokeybear.com/>

Title: *The Best Book of Weather*

Author: Simon Adams

Genre: Non-Fiction

Summary: This book describes all types of weather and the impact that weather can have. Every page is associated with a picture indicating the areas of the world in which different weather patterns strike. The book discusses the power of the sun, the climates and the seasons, weather formations formed in the clouds and sky, and the disastrous types of weather that can cause damage at any given time. But weather does not just happen for some unknown reason, there is always an explanation behind why it is sunny one day and rainy the next, why it often snows in March, and why fog may be the reason why school got cancelled. Whatever the type of storm, this book is intended to help children learn and understand the dramatic forces behind it in experiencing the ever-changing world of weather.

Activity: Using a piece of white construction paper, have the students fold that paper in half and then in half again so that there are four sections on the piece of paper. To work on the seasons some more, have the students write the name of a season in each section of the paper, (such as summer, spring, fall, winter). Then have the students draw a picture with crayons and colored pencils of their favorite memory that happened during each of the seasons. The pictures could be about anything so allow the students to use their creativity and imagination in drawing them. Then after they have drawn their pictures, have them write a three sentence summary as to what that memory was and why it was important to them. They will be assessed on their participation and effort in their drawings (This activity is intended for younger elementary kids).

Original Idea

Title: *The Little Island*

Author: Golden MacDonald

Illustrated by: Leonard Weisgard

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: This book sticks with the theme of a little island in the ocean where winds and birds fly by, fish swim around, clouds pass over, and flowers begin to bloom on. The seasons and the storm and the day and night changed the island, while the lobsters, seals, gulls and other creatures inhabited it. This book goes into vivid detail as to what takes place on the island day in and day out. Creatures of all different sizes come and go while new life is born by way of eggs. Through this constant activity, however, the island remains calm and peaceful never changing form even when a small kitten comes to destroy it. The kitten learns of the nature of the island and like all the other creatures who lived there, begins to understand its beauty.

Activity: The book *The Little Island* talks a lot about organisms living in an environment or ecosystem. So this activity will enable the students to see and understand the meaning of the terms such as biodiversity, plant life, and ecosystem. The students will go outside (park, playground) and collect as many different types of leaves as they can based on color, size, and shape (These leaves will represent different species). Then as a class, make a list of the different leaf types collected. This will help the students understand the first level of biodiversity- that an ecosystem is composed of many different organisms. Then find the most common leaf type found and have the students go back outside to the spot where they found that type of leaf and each bring back one leaf of that species. Make sure that the students notice that even though their leaves all come from the same species of plant, the leaves all look somewhat different. Then ask the students to go home and discover the biodiversity of an area near their home. Have them bring in samples of other leaves they found at home to see how their ecosystem differs from the one at school. Each student will be asked to bring in 3 different types of leaves to share and discuss with the class focusing on the biodiversity concept.

<http://www.proteacher.com/110004.shtml>

Title: *The Paperboy*

Author: Dav Pilkey

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: The book talks about the journey of a paperboy who is forced to get up and deliver papers when the rest of the world is still asleep. The temptation to stay in bed and not perform his job is always there, but the paperboy resists those temptations and gets up every morning knowing he has a job to fulfill. His dog joins him in this early morning ritual as the paperboy makes his own breakfast, wraps his papers, and prepares himself for the cold morning ahead of him on his bike. He rides and delivers the papers with ease because he has his route down pat and as he is finishing his job, many other people are waking up to perform theirs. When he arrives home after completing his deliveries he walks up to his room to see his parents just now waking up and his sister watching the early morning cartoons. Now it's his time to sleep because the paperboy doesn't work during the day.

Activity: This book will tie into a lesson over responsibility because in the book, the paperboy was responsible for making sure he got up every morning to deliver the papers no matter how tired he was. So in teaching this lesson share and explain the 6 responsible behaviors with the entire class. These include:

- 1) When you agree to do something, do it!
- 2) Answer for your own actions and don't make excuses
- 3) Take care of your own matters
- 4) Be trustworthy
- 5) Always use your head
- 6) Don't put things off

(Give examples of each of these 6 behaviors in class)

Have a discussion about classroom responsibility. What are the kids' responsibilities, and what are the teacher's responsibilities? Make a chart of these responsibilities on the board. What are the consequences of being irresponsible? What are the rewards of being responsible?

Then in their response journals, have the students write about a time when they did something really responsible. Describe it. What was the outcome? How did it make you feel about yourself? Describe a time you did something really irresponsible. What was the outcome? How did it make you feel about yourself?

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/BeingResponsible.html>

Title: *Too Close Friends*

Author: Shen Roddie

Illustrated by: Sally Anne Lambert

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: The book talks about a story involving two really close friends in the pig and the hippo. When Pig decided to do something nice for her best friend and neighbor, Hippo, she started knitting a scarf for his birthday. When Hippo wanted to do something nice for pig, he found his shears and started trimming the hedge that ran between their houses. But no one ever told Hippo that tall hedges make good neighbors because now that the hedges were cut down, both Pig and Hippo could see into each other's house and thus see each other's disgusting habits. They got upset with one another and decided to stop seeing each other; meanwhile the hedges were again beginning to grow tall. They were sick of being alone so they decided to visit each other again on Hippo's birthday and became friends just like the old times as the hedges once again covered the space between their houses.

Activity: In their response journals, have the students write their very own "Friendship Recipe" telling someone else how to be a good friend. The recipe will include different ingredients (ways to be a good friend) with the different steps for either being a good friend or making a new friend. Have each student find a partner to share his/her recipe with.

(We did this in my second grade classroom)

Title: *Time Train*

Author: Paul Fleischman

Illustrated by: Claire Ewart

Genre: Fantasy

Summary: A class decides to go on a field trip for spring vacation to the Dinosaur National Monument when they take a wicked turn on the *Rocky Mountain Limited* as it takes the children into prehistoric times. They travel through the different states and see all sorts of history such as generals and war leaders and woolly mammoths in the cold until they finally reach their destination, the Dinosaur Museum. Here the children cook dinosaur eggs for breakfast, go stegosaurus back riding, and pterodactyl gliding. The class teacher, Miss Pym, is not impressed with the change in scenery, but it doesn't matter because the kids in the class had one fantastic field trip interacting and playing with the many different Dinosaurs.

Activity: Make a chart with a list of prefixes and suffixes for dinosaur names and explain how dinosaurs are named for certain characteristics. Then give students a list of dinosaur names and its meaning such as Tyrannosaurus Rex = tyrant lizard king. Then using this chart, have the students create their own dinosaur by combining the prefixes and the suffixes. Then have the students brainstorm and list ideas or characteristics of the dinosaur, such as the period it lived in, how big it was, what it looked like, what it ate, how it walked, and etc. They will then draw a picture of their dinosaur based on its name and its characteristics. Using the words from their brainstorm, they will write a short paragraph about their dinosaur. Once everything has been edited, have the students make a poster of their dinosaur with the written paragraph at the bottom. Make sure the students are using their creativity as these posters will be hung up around the classroom.

<http://www.busyteacherscafe.com/themes/dinosaurs.htm>

Title: *The Honest-to-Goodness Truth*

Author: Patricia Mckissack

Illustrated by: Giselle Potter

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Summary: This book talks about how Libby would always lie to her mother and because of her lies would usually end up getting punished for it. Her mother would always tell her, "Tell the truth and shame the devil" because she would never tell the truth. Well one day Libby decides that she is never going to lie again and in following through with this vow of only telling the truth, the whole world seems to be mad at her. Her best friend, Ruthie Mae, gets upset when Libby tells all their friends that she has a giant hole in her sock. Then she tattles on another kid in the class because he didn't get his homework done on time so she tells the teacher on him. Libby becomes frustrated because telling the truth is just as difficult as telling a lie. She struggles to figure out that even though it's always wrong to tell a lie, there's a right and a wrong way to tell the truth.

Activity: After reading the book get the class into a grand discussion format and ask them questions over their interpretation of the book. These questions could be used as a tool to see what the students comprehended and what valuable knowledge they received from reading the book. These questions could include:

Do you think Libby was trying to hurt her friends' feelings when she told the truth?

When might it be wrong to keep a secret?

What happened to Lilly to make her realize that the truth needs to be told in the right way?

After asking these questions, then have them get in groups of three to discuss with one another a time when someone either told them a secret or the other way around. Have the group choose their story and then share and explain it with the rest of the class.

The author also uses a great deal of similes and metaphors throughout the book so that is what this next activity will focus on. An example was when Libby lied she was "surprised at how easy the lie slid out of her mouth, like it was greased with warm butter." So have the students point at other similes and metaphors throughout the book so they understand the contents of a simile and metaphor as well as the differences between the two. Then give the students a list of some boring sentences and have them change the sentences into similes using like or as to give the sentence more excitement.

<http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com/2009/03/honest-to-goodness-truth.html>

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